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Canadians Celebrate Progress in Human Rights

OTTAWA - December 8, 2000 - In recognition of the International Human Rights Day, the head of the Canadian Human Rights Commission invited all Canadians to celebrate the rights we share and the progress accomplished to date.

"Each year on December 10, we celebrate our diversity, we celebrate the laws and covenants that protect it, and we celebrate the contribution of all Canadians in making our country a world leader in human rights issues," said Michelle Falardeau-Ramsay, Chief Commissioner of the Canadian Human Rights Commission.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a document that states that "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights," was adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 10, 1948. Its 30 articles set out a wide range of human rights principles, including political and civil rights, and equality and economic rights.

The legacy of the Universal Declaration, and the resulting international conventions and covenants, is the recognition that governments have a duty to protect and promote human rights.

"Compared to most countries, Canada does very well in safeguarding human rights for its citizens," said Mrs. Falardeau-Ramsay. "But more and more, our wealth is shared among fewer and fewer Canadians. The gap between rich and poor grows wider all the time, and at the expense of those least able to afford it. We still have challenges to overcome, particularly as they affect women, Aboriginal peoples, persons with disabilities and members of visible minorities."

"Equality rights are important to Canadians. And it is the duty of all of us to ensure the protection and expansion of human rights in Canada," she added.

"If we are to continue celebrating our progress, we must strive to make the principles of the Universal Declaration a reality for all Canadians," concluded the Chief Commissioner.

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